

Commercial and Industrial Buildings,
Bishop's Block
90 Main Street
Dubuque
Dubuque County
Iowa

HABS No. IA-160-BA

HABS
IOWA,
31-DUBU,
13-BA-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

HABS.
IOWA,
31-DUBU,
13-BA-

Commercial and Industrial Buildings,

Bishop's Block

HABS No. IA-160-BA

Site Location: 90 Main Street
Dubuque, Dubuque County, Iowa
DOT designation: Resource Site No. 5.23
USGS quadrangle: Dubuque South Iowa 7.5'
Cadastral grid: SE1/4 NE1/4 S25 T89N R2E
Lot dimensions: 75.5' x 113': .20 acre
Lot description: City Lot 531 and North 1/2
of City Lot 532; West 1/2
of Lots 1 and 2 of Dubuque
Harbor Company Addition

Present Owner: unknown
Present Usage: vacant
Present Condition: fair

Overall Dimensions: 75'6" x 113'; five stories
Orientation: west
Architectural Description: Plan type: 5-story rectangular open-plan warehouse.
Structure: iron / wood frame with masonry bearing walls.
Ext. walls: common red brick laid in common bond.
Foundation: coursed stone ashlar perimeter walls with terra cotta water table.
Roof: flat composition roof with brick parapets and terra cotta tile copings.
Chimneys: square exterior brick chimneys lined along side walls; large, cylindrical exterior chimneys with elaborately corbeled caps that form design elements in the two rear corners.
Windows: painted wood 2/2 (front and side) or 4/4 (rear) double-hung windows throughout upper levels, with segmental brick arch (2nd-4th floors) or stone lintel heads and continuous ornamented terra cotta sills; fixed-pane showcase windows on 1st floor front and 1 bay of north side; 2 small Diocletian windows on 1st floor north side that copy lines of nearby doorways.
Openings: main entrances on front have all been boarded over or removed; single north side entrance located at loading dock: double-leaf doorway with sidelights and transom and semi-elliptical brick arch head with corbeled brick architrave.
Details: distinctive brick tower in northwest corner that springs from 5th floor of building; tower has single 1/1 double-hung window, elaborate brick corbeling and steeply pitched witch's cap

roof; extensive brick corbeling at parapets of front and north side; corbeled brick drip caps with terra cotta trim over front and side upper-level windows; iron I-beam lintels over 1st floor showcase windows; ornamental terra cotta plinth stones for 1st floor brick columns on storefront; paneled wood bulkheads below showcase windows; terra cotta cornerstone in base of northwest corner column.

Construction Date : 1887

Architecture Style: Victorian Italianate

Physical History : In 1886 Dubuque Bishop commissioned locally prominent architect F.D. Hyde to design this five-story brick commercial block on the southeast corner of First and Main streets. "It will be the best constructed building of the character in the city," the *Dubuque Daily Times* predicted. Completed late in 1887, the imposing Victorian Italianate structure first housed the wholesale grocery business of M.M. Walker. After Walker built his own warehouse [HABS No. 1A-160-BJ] one block south on Main in 1894, the Bishop's Block, as it came to be known, was occupied by another wholesale grocery firm, the John T. Hancock Company. (A Hancock sign painted on the south party wall of the building can still be discerned.) Established in 1858, the company remained here until it was acquired in 1908 by the Western Grocer Company. This latter firm occupied the building until c.1960. Other than some minor changes to its first floor storefront, the Bishop's Block has retained a remarkably high degree of architectural integrity. It now stands vacant and deteriorating, with an uncertain future.

Significance: Born August 1825 in Limerick County, Ireland, John Hennessey came to the United States at the age of 22. He entered a Catholic seminary at Carondelet, near St. Louis and was ordained there in 1850. His first parish assignment was at New Madrid, Missouri, but because of poor health he returned to St. Louis after only four months. Hennessey was reassigned to the Carondelet Seminary as a professor of dogmatic theology and ecclesiastical history. After ascending to the presidency of the college, he served in the Vatican, St. Louis and St. Joseph, Missouri, before being consecrated as Dubuque's third bishop in 1866. Hennessey immediately began expanding the church's already strong influence in Iowa, building new schools, churches and convents in the larger cities and more than doubling the number of priests in the state. Additionally, he established Mercy Hospital (1868) in Davenport, created a classical school and re-established the Diocesan Seminary (1873), idle since 1855. Strong-willed, aggressive and oratorically gifted, Hennessey was named Dubuque's first Archbishop in 1893.

In addition to his ecclesiastical role in the community, Hennessey was an astute businessman, entering into a variety of speculative real estate and

business ventures. He was "a good orator, a man of zeal and firm judgment," one local newspaper stated, "and deservedly holds a high reputation for managing both spiritual and temporal affairs." By the time of his death in March 1900, Hennessey had bought or built dozens of structures around Dubuque. He listed numerous properties in the city among his estimated \$1 million worth of assets, including: the Bishop's Block, four brick buildings on Bluff Street, a brick tenement on Locust Street, the Board of Trade Building, a 222-acre farm near Epworth and numerous undeveloped lots, plus stock holdings in the Julien House Hotel, the Dubuque High Bridge, First National, Second National, Dubuque National and German banks. As the largest of these, the Bishop's Block is thus historically significant in its association with this influential Dubuque religious leader and as the place of business for three of the city's important early wholesale grocers. It is architecturally significant as a high-style example of the commercial architecture of the market district on Dubuque's lower Main Street - a prominent visual landmark in the city.

References:

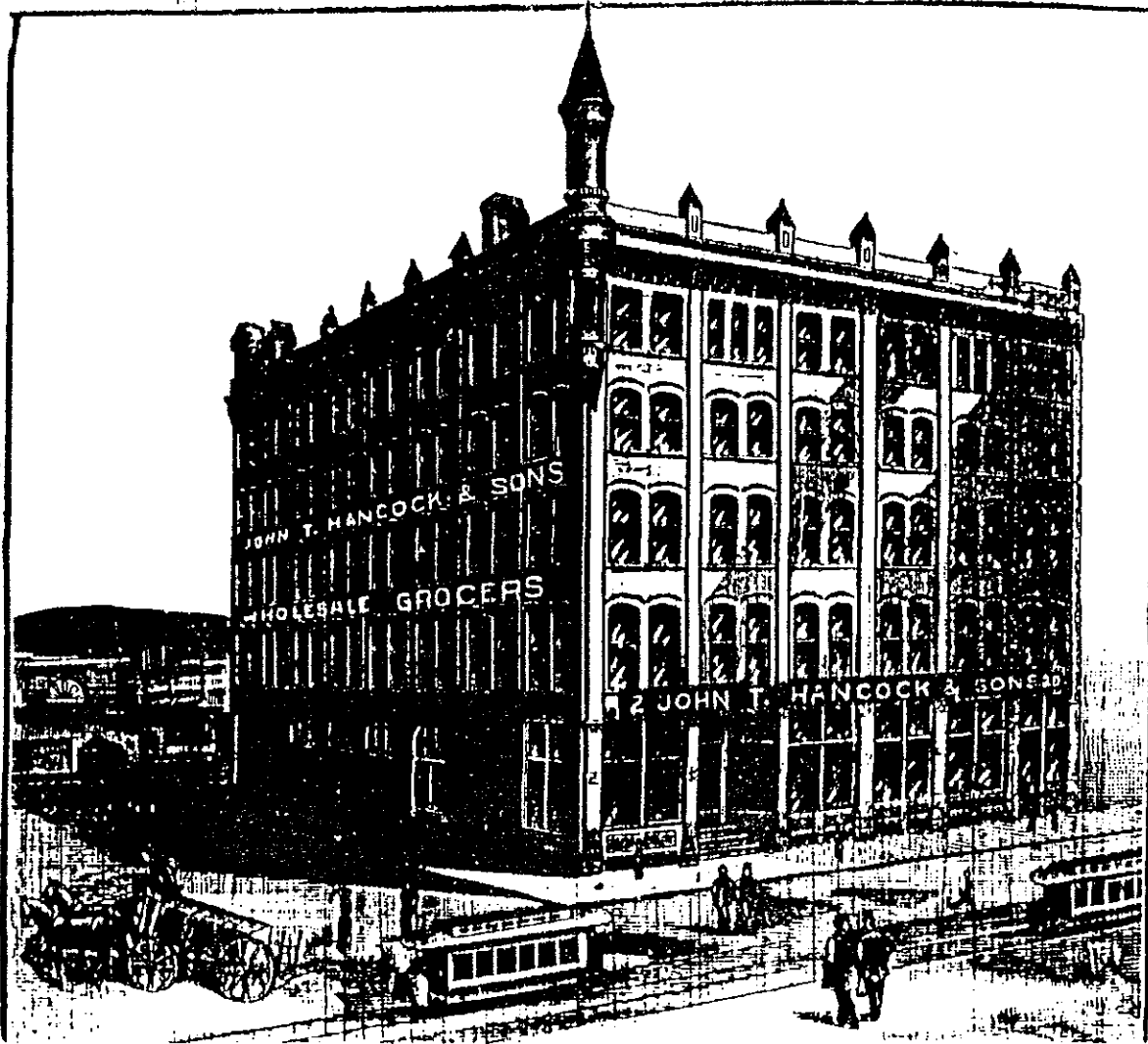
- Dubuque City Directories: 1857 - 1970.
- Sanborn Insurance Maps: 1884, 1891, 1909, 1972.
- Iowa State Gazetteer and Business Directory: 1882-1923.
- Dubuque County Assessment Record: 3-17-10-1.
- Iowa Department of Transportation, "Draft Environmental Impact Statement - Cultural Resources Assessment."
- Florence Crane, *The Catholic History of Dubuque, Iowa* (Dubuque: Enterprise Press, 1905), page 12-14.
- John Hennessey, "Last Will and Testament," March 1900, located at Loras College, Dubuque, Iowa.
- M. Jane Cogan, "Dubuque's First Archbishop: the Image and the Man," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society*, vol. 92, Nos. 1-4, 1984, page 83.
- Barbara Kucherd, "The History of Catholics in the Dubuque Area," unpublished paper located at Loras College Library, Dubuque, Iowa.
- H.W. Gardner, *Greater Dubuque* (Dubuque: Times Journal, 1911), page 57.
- M.M. Hoffman, *Centennial History of the Archdiocese of Dubuque* (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Columbia College Press, 1938).
- Lawrence J. Sommer, *The Heritage of Dubuque: An Architectural View* (East Dubuque: Tel Graphics, 1975), page 90.
- Dubuque Daily Herald*: 1 January 1887.
- Dubuque Daily Times*: 27 February 1887.

Compiler:

Clayton B. Fraser, Fraserdesign, Loveland Colorado
December 1988.

Commercial and Industrial Buildings,
Bishop's Block
HABS No. IA-160-BA
page 4

JOHN T. HANCOCK & SONS



Importers and Wholesale Grocers.
2 to 20 S. Main St., Dubuque, Iowa.